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FM AMEMBASSY FREETOWN  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9718  
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHLC/AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE PRIORITY 0034  
RUEHLU/AMEMBASSY LUANDA PRIORITY 0022  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAHINGEN GE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L FREETOWN 000341

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [KPAO](#) [EWWT](#) [EFIS](#) [PINR](#) [MOPS](#) [EAID](#) [SENV](#)

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SUBJECT: USS CARR VISIT TO FREETOWN -- FRUITFUL EXCHANGES,  
FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

REF: A. MONROVIA 514

[1](#)B. KINSHASA 499

[1](#)C. 04 FREETOWN 1110

Classified By: CHARGE JAMES A. STEWART FOR REASONS 1.4 B/D.

[1](#)1. (C) The USS Carr called on Freetown April 22-24 as part of its ongoing mission to strengthen partnerships in the Gulf of Guinea. The Navy wants to keep tabs on maritime activity connected to trafficking in drugs, trafficking in persons, illegal fisheries, and pollution, Task Force Commodore (Navy) Captain Thomas Rowden explained to the Charge. Rowden added that the Sixth Fleet, to which the ship is attached, intends to have a ship in the Gulf of Guinea at least 10 months each year. Also high on the agenda is Navy or Marine Corps training which could come with the next ship visit envisioned for September or October.

[1](#)2. (U) To help monitor ship traffic off Sierra Leone's coast, Rowden suggested installing the Automated Identification System (AIS) at the embassy once the mission has moved into the new facility in August. Information on the identities, locations, characteristics, and cargoes of ships over 300 tons could easily be shared with the Government with the installation of an unclassified laptop (ref A) . When Rowden presented the idea during a shipboard visit, Deputy Defense Minister Joe Blell expressed enthusiasm for having such information to further the modernization of the maritime wing of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces. (Note: The maritime wing consists only of the recently donated Chinese Shanghai patrol boat. The crew is still in training. The three smaller 10-meter patrol boats the US is donating are scheduled to arrive April 28, with Navy and Coast Guard training to follow. End Note.)

[1](#)3. (C) Blell was also enthusiastic about the potential for future maritime training offered by the US (beyond what is scheduled for the patrol boats). Commodore Rowden noted that the next ship visit which is likely in September or October would provide such an opportunity. He foresees an amphibious assault ship carrying Marines who could cooperate in training for Sierra Leonean land and maritime forces. Rowden had the occasion to discuss the training potential with UK Brigadier Barry Le Grys, Commander of the UK-led International Military Advisory Training Team (IMATT) and IMATT Maritime Advisor Commander Danny Yarker (UK). They saw great potential for cooperation in offering training. There were earlier plans for the USS Mt. Whitney to put in at Freetown in May, but Rowden informed CDA that she will not visit, being too large

(more than four times the tonnage of the Carr) and difficult to maneuver for Freetown's port facilities and infrastructure.

¶4. (U) The PAO organized visits aboard the Carr over the weekend for the local press and independent television. Besides touring the ship, print and electronic journalists interviewed Commodore Rowden and Captain Lang. The Navy officers told the media about the three patrol boats the USG is donating and about the Carr's observation and photos of illegal fishing inside Sierra Leoneans exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Several local stories covered the Carr's visit, but there has yet to be any editorial notice of the first US Navy ship calling at Freetown in more than three years.

¶5. (C) Comment: Post warmly welcomed the USS Carr to show the flag and US commitment to Sierra Leone in its struggle to rebuild. Visits to the ship and representational events were highly useful for further contact building and partnership development. In addition, there were good initial discussions with the Deputy Minister of Defense and with the UK IMATT commander about future Navy and Marine Corps training. Training can help upgrade local armed forces capacity and contribute to solving the maritime problems. Post hopes those discussions bear fruit with the next ship visit proffered for September or October. It seems to us that the Navy's stated Gulf of Guinea mission identifies the correct major concerns as ships like the Carr can gather and relay invaluable information and thus encourage Sierra Leoneans to enforce their own laws. In that vein, we recall that in December 2004, a patrolling British Royal Navy ship spotted illegal fishing (by US shrimpers) and notified Sierra Leonean authorities who dispatched a boat to detain the offending fishing vessels (ref C). End Comment.  
STEWART